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Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia

I. Introduction

1. The present report, which is submitted pursuant to paragraph 25 of Security Council resolution 2358 (2017) and paragraph 55 of resolution 2372 (2017), provides information on the implementation of both resolutions, including on the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). The report covers major developments in Somalia during the period from 23 August to 20 December 2017.

II. Political, security and economic overview

A. Political developments

2. The reporting period was marked by strained relations between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states. The Federal Government felt that the federal member states were taking bilateral decisions on Somalia's foreign relations, which is the remit of the Federal Government, while the federal member states alleged that the Federal Government was taking decisions on key national issues without including them. Divergent positions over the Gulf crisis exacerbated tensions: Puntland, the Interim South-West Administration and the Galmudug Interim Administration publicly broke away from the position of neutrality declared by the Federal Government. Inadequate efforts to institutionalize the relationship and the absence of a mechanism to bring the Federal Government and the leaders of the federal member states together to consult and decide on key political issues rendered the relationship even more vulnerable to internal and external pressures.

3. In the HirShabelle Interim Administration, the regional assembly elected Mohamed Abdi Waare as the State President on 16 September. The HirShabelle regional assembly had impeached his predecessor, Ali Abdullahi Osoble, in August, citing poor performance and lack of consultation with the Assembly. President Waare was formally inaugurated on 22 October in a ceremony attended by Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire, the presidents of all federal member states, my Special Representative for Somalia and representatives of the international community.

4. Meanwhile, tensions between the federal member states and the Federal Government escalated amid allegations of attempts to undermine the leaders of some

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federal member states by elements within the Federal Government. The Galmudug Interim Administration and the Interim South-West Administration experienced political turbulence, including multiple motions in their state assemblies to impeach their respective presidents. In the Galmudug Interim Administration, conflicting positions by the President, Ahmed Duale Geele "Xaaf", and his Vice-President, Arabey Hashi Abdi, on the Gulf crisis led to a political confrontation between the two. The leaders of both Galmudug and South-West state alleged that the attempts to unseat them were sponsored by individuals in the Federal Government. The Jubaland administration also made similar allegations.

5. The Presidents of the five federal member states held a consultative meeting in Kismaayo, Jubaland, from 8 to 10 October, without the presence of representatives of the Federal Government. The meeting focused on, among other issues, cooperation among the federal member states, the relationship between the Federal Government and the federal member states and the fight against Al-Shabaab. The presidents of the federal member states formed a "Council of Interstate Cooperation" and decided temporarily to suspend all cooperation with the Federal Government, including on legislative matters and the constitutional review process, pending resolution of key issues that had strained their relations with the Federal Government.

6. Following the meeting in Kismaayo, after the deadly Al-Shabaab attack in Mogadishu on 14 October, President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmajo" invited all leaders of the federal member states to a consultative meeting in Mogadishu on political and security developments. The consultative meeting was held from 29 October to 5 November, after which a communiqué was issued in which the participants agreed to step up security across the country, build a working relationship based on cooperation, consensus and trust and refrain from activities that could cause political instability. They also agreed to establish a technical committee to reach political consensus on key issues related to federalism within six months.

7. In "Somaliland" the long-delayed presidential elections took place on 13 November. Musa Bihi Abdi of the ruling Peace, Unity and Development Party (Kulmiye) was declared the winner, with 305,909 votes (55.19 per cent), against the candidate of the main opposition, the National Party (Waddani), who garnered 226,290 votes (40.73 per cent). The Waddani party raised objections that the election was biased in favour of the ruling party. Clan elders played a key role in resolving the disagreement and domestic and international observers, including a team from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, declared the voting to be fair and the outcome credible. The Supreme Court endorsed the result on 28 November.

B. Security developments

8. The overall security situation remained volatile across Somalia, including in Mogadishu, despite the operationalization of the Mogadishu stabilization force and strengthened security measures. In August, there were a number explosions caused by vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, mainly in the vicinity of Makka Al-Mukarama Road, an area frequented by Government officials, with some commercial establishments. There was a steady flow of low-intensity armed clashes, crime and terrorism-related incidents in September, with two large-scale attacks using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. Targeted assassinations continued in the city with a record number of 12 assassinations targeting businessmen, security personnel, civil servants and Government officials.

9. Following a brief lull in attacks using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices in September, a suicide attack using such a device took place on 14 October at a major junction near the Safari Hotel in Mogadishu, followed by a second explosion some kilometres away. The explosion killed an estimated 512 people, with 230 injured and 70 missing, in what is being regarded as the deadliest terrorist attack in Somalia's history. One national staff member of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was among those killed. The attack bore the signature of Al-Shabaab although the group has not claimed responsibility.

10. On 28 October, a complex attack targeted the Naasa Hablood 2 Hotel in Mogadishu, in which 23 people were killed, including the Minister of the Interior, Federalism and Reconciliation of the Interim South-West Administration, Madobe Mohamed Nunow. Thirty people sustained injuries in the attack, including one national staff member of the World Food Programme. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack. The Director-General of the National Intelligence and Security Agency and the Commissioner of the Somali Police Force were removed from their posts following the attacks of 14 and 28 October.

11. In the south and central regions, Al-Shabaab continued to launch remote-controlled improvised explosive devices, ambushes and hit-and-run attacks, particularly against the forces of the Somali national army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) travelling along the main supply routes in Bay, Bakool and the Shabelle regions. There were four large-scale Al-Shabaab attacks on towns and security installations in these regions, namely on Bulo Gaduud, Belet Xaawa, Ceel Waaq and Afgooye. An increase in the number of attacks by Al-Shabaab was also recorded along the Kenya-Somalia border region in the run-up to the rescheduled elections in Kenya on 26 October. At least eight attacks by Al-Shabaab were recorded during this period, compared to two in September and three in August.

12. Periodic armed encounters between Al-Shabaab and Somali security forces occurred in Puntland. Al-Shabaab fighters fired six mortar shells at the village of Af Urur in the Galgala mountains on 15 November near a camp of Puntland security forces. No injuries were reported in the incident. Movement and activity by members of Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) was reported in and near Boosaaso, Puntland, and responsibility for a suicide attack outside a police station in Boosaaso on 4 October was claimed by ISIL. Reports of incoming fighters from Yemen to areas in Puntland were also received.

13. While the security situation remained relatively calm in "Somaliland" during the reporting period, there was some unrest before and after the presidential election of 13 November, mainly violent demonstrations in New Hargeysa, Erigavo, in the disputed Sanaag region, and in Burao, in "Somaliland", by supporters of opposition parties.

C. Economic developments

14. Somalia's economy was on the path to recovery before the drought. Real growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) appears to have weakened, down from 3.2 per cent to 2.4 per cent in the first half of 2017. The agriculture sector experienced near total collapse due to the drought, with crop failures and reduced rural employment opportunities, widespread shortages of water and pasture and increased livestock mortality. Drought and food insecurity have driven up food prices, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports that inflation is expected to rise to 2.9 per

cent in 2017 from 2.3 per cent in 2016. Crop prices significantly increased during the drought period, affecting household purchasing power.

15. The Federal Government has put a policy framework and facilitative measures in place to improve the performance of the economic and financial sectors. However, the overall effectiveness of such measures in raising revenues remains limited, constrained largely due to overdependence on a small revenue base and the absence of a political agreement with the federal member states on revenue sharing. Domestic revenue has increased in nominal terms, growing 15 per cent over the year, until September, compared to the same period in 2016. Grants grew 23 per cent. Domestic revenue was $112.7 million in 2016 (about 2.7 per cent of GDP) and is expected to reach $137.6 million in 2017. Weak revenue mobilization has hindered the ability of the Government to deliver services to citizens. Unrealistic revenue projections, coupled with weak expenditure controls, have contributed to an accumulation of arrears.

16. The Government continues to lead a programme of wide-ranging economic governance reforms, including: the introduction of automation in revenue collection and expenditure management; sector regulation; expanded statistical capacities; and a currency reform agenda. On 12 December, IMF welcomed the commitment of the Somali authorities to implement policies and reforms to restore key economic and financial institutions, describing the performance of the Somali authorities under the IMF staff monitored programme through September 2017 as "broadly satisfactory". It also passed the $274 million budget for 2018 on 13 December.

17. Important legislation was passed this year, strengthening the credibility of the Government's reform agenda and the fiscal and fiduciary position of Somalia. The promulgation of the Communications Act, which provides for the first formal regulation of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, provides a legal basis for licensing current operators and, potentially, introducing new competition. The Act is also critical for the Government's finances, as revenue from the ICT sector is equivalent to around 11 per cent of GDP, although very little has been has been contributed in terms of taxation.

III. Support for peacebuilding and state-building efforts

A. Establishment of a functional federal state

1. Deepening federalism

18. There was limited political progress on the federalization process during the first half of the reporting period, as political consultations between the Federal Government and the federal member states on federalism issues initially stalled. This was linked with tensions around the Gulf Crisis and the lack of an accepted forum to discuss and take decisions on relevant issues, including the division of powers, the management and control of natural resources and strategic infrastructure such as ports, the distribution of revenues and the status of the Benadir region (Mogadishu). However, on completion of a consultative meeting, held from 29 October to 5 November, the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states leaders agreed to task a technical committee to develop options that should provide the basis for a political settlement on these key issues. Decisions taken on 3 December by the National Security Council also deepened federalism, most notably the political

agreement on police distribution and the agreement on a justice and corrections model.

2. Constitutional review

19. Progress on the constitutional review process was mixed. Despite initial setbacks, following meetings convened by President Farmajo, the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs, the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission and the Joint Parliamentary Constitutional Review Oversight Committee, with the support of the United Nations integrated constitutional support team, developed a consolidated road map and a memorandum of understanding, setting out the agreed division of roles and responsibilities. On 14 November, the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs, the Constitutional Review Committee and the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission signed the memorandum of understanding and endorsed the consolidated road map for the next phase of the constitutional review process. This is expected to pave the way for the holding of the delayed national constitutional convention.

3. Prevention and resolution of violent conflicts

20. On the political crisis in the Galmudug Interim Administration, following the meeting between representatives of the Federal Government and representatives of the federal member states in Mogadishu from 29 October to 5 November, President Farmajo invited Vice-President Hashi to Mogadishu in order to mediate discussions between him and President "Xaaf". The President also met with Galmudug members of the Federal Parliament to encourage unity. My Special Representative also met Vice-President Hashi to encourage him to find a solution to the political crisis. On 17 November, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) convened consultations between the Galmudug Interim Administration and the paramilitary group Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a in Nairobi to prepare for future talks, followed by a workshop in Djibouti from 27 to 30 November, which included initial discussions on reconciliation issues. On 3 December, President "Xaaf" and leader of Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a, Sheikh Shakir, announced that they had reached a preliminary agreement on power sharing, which was signed on 6 December in the presence of the leadership of the Federal Government and the presidents of the federal member states. The parties have agreed to enter into a second phase of discussions in Dhusamareb to work out details of the agreement. The United Nations is working with the Federal Government, IGAD and international partners to ensure a coordinated approach.

21. The situation in Gaalkacyo remained stable but fragile. From 5 to 8 September, the Puntland and Galmudug authorities, with support from the United Nations, held a peace conference in Gaalkacyo to examine ways to fully implement previous agreements and to promote peaceful coexistence. An inclusive 36-member peace committee was formed on 8 September to replace the joint ceasefire committee. UNSOM and AMISOM support to the establishment and training of the Gaalkacyo joint police force, an initiative under the ceasefire agreement, continued, with the training of an additional 100 police from Puntland and Galmudug. The 200 trained police officers continue to conduct joint police patrols with positive responses from the local community.

22. Relations between the President of the Interim South-West Administration, Sharif Hassan, and his opposition remained strained. Three members of the opposition South-West Salvation Council were arrested in September but were later released on the orders of the Chief Justice, leading to accusations against the Chief Justice of

collusion with the opposition. The gradual improvement in relations between the Federal Government and the federal member states, following their consultative meeting from 29 October to 5 November muted calls for the impeachment of President Sharif Hassan.

23. On 19 October, "Somaliland" and the self-proclaimed "Khatumo State" signed a five-point agreement in Caynabo, in the Sool region, to pave the way for unity between the two and to undermine Puntland's claims to the disputed regions of Sool, Sanaag and Togdheer. Tensions between "Somaliland" and Puntland in the disputed regions flared up prior to the presidential elections in "Somaliland" on 13 November. Puntland President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali "Gaas" was instructed by the Puntland Parliament to prevent "Somaliland" from holding elections in the disputed regions, using military force if necessary. On the eve of the presidential election, Puntland forces were reinforced in Tukarak and near Buhoodle in Togdheer region, prompting "Somaliland" to deploy heavy military contingents in both areas. Tensions deescalated when Puntland drew the forces back following engagement with the "Somaliland" and Puntland leadership by my Special Representative and representatives of the international community.

24. During the reporting period, UNSOM initiated mediation-skills training for its staff, and capacity-building in conflict resolution for female members of Parliament and civil society actors. It also provided expert advice to the Federal Government on the drafting of a national reconciliation framework, and continued to support several federal member states with local reconciliation initiatives. In its efforts to further strengthen reconciliation and conflict resolution by the Federal Government and other stakeholders, UNSOM created a unique portfolio of reference materials on these themes, which will form the basis for a national colloquium on peace and reconciliation planned for February 2018, linking practitioners with senior representatives from the Federal Government and representatives of the federal member states with national and international experts on Somalia, for the purpose of creating a shared "knowledge network".

4. Support for universal elections

25. In December, the National Independent Electoral Commission registered seven political parties, an essential step in preparation for universal elections in 2020–2021. In line with the 2016 political party law, parties register temporarily, with official registration to take place after the registration of eligible voters.

26. In September and October, the National Independent Electoral Commission conducted a voter registration feasibility study, supported by the United Nations. Voter registration methodologies were assessed in the context of Somalia, which lacks national registration data. The study sought input from the Federal Government and the federal member states. Interlocutors raised a number of issues, including: accessibility and security; internally displaced persons and the nomadic population; the need for an electoral legal framework and an amended citizenship law to define eligible voters; and the need for agreement on outstanding constitutional issues. The study will assist in deciding on a voter registration methodology in 2018, for implementation in 2019.

27. In September, a federal-level electoral task force was established comprising representatives from the National Independent Electoral Commission, the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, the Offices of the President and Prime Minister, parliamentary representatives and other relevant ministries. The aim of the task force is to enhance coordination within the Federal Government on electoral law

drafting issues, including consideration of electoral systems. The United Nations provided technical advice on inclusive systems of representation, including those suited to post-conflict environments.

28. The National Independent Electoral Commission, UNDP, UNSOM and donors are finalizing the programme for the next stage of United Nations electoral support for Somalia, focusing on essential steps to be taken in 2018. UNSOM also produced a booklet on the various communications products and services it generated to support the 2016–2017 electoral process as a guide for Somalia's universal elections in 2021.

B. Cross-cutting issues

1. Gender equality and women's empowerment

29. Despite notable progress made in women's representation in the Federal Parliament, promoting women's leadership and decision-making roles remained a challenge. Women were notably not represented in parliamentary committees, including the Joint Parliamentary Constitutional Review Oversight Committee reviewing the provisional constitution.

30. To promote a greater role for women, my Special Representative held consultations on 25 October with a group of 11 women Members of Parliament and civil society leaders, during which they identified local reconciliation, constitutional review and the 2020–2021 elections as priorities. The group is to be convened on a regular basis.

31. On 13 November, my Special Representative convened the annual "Open Day on Women and Peace and Security", attended by over 50 women leaders representing civil society and Federal and state government institutions. The event highlighted the important role of women in peace and reconciliation efforts in Somalia and stressed the need to enhance women's leadership and their decision-making role, as well as to enhance protections for women, particularly those in communities of internally displaced persons.

2. Youth empowerment

32. In November, the Federal Government adopted the national youth policy, developed with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports, in coordination with the United Nations, has convened three retreats with the ministries of youth from the federal member states to increase coordination within the sector. The United Nations is supporting the efforts of the ministries to develop a joint two-year work plan for the implementation of the youth policy. From 17 to 19 December, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the United Nations hosted the second National Youth Conference, attended by my Envoy on Youth, gathering 300 young people to discuss the role of youth in the implementation of the national youth policy and the national development plan and to identify young people's priorities. The United Nations continues to expand the youth portfolio, scaling up youth employment programming and developing new programmes on the political participation of young people; youth-led prevention and countering of violent extremism; and support for young entrepreneurs and internally displaced persons.

3. Development coordination

33. In August, the Federal Government endorsed a new aid architecture that builds on the structures of the New Deal Compact under the Somalia Development and Reconstruction Facility, with adjustments made to align with the national development plan. A new mutual accountability framework for the New Partnership for Somalia for Peace, Stability and Prosperity was adopted at the Somalia Partnership Forum on 5 December, providing a robust framework for joint cooperation and accountability between Somalia and its international partners and following on the heels of the Somalia New Deal Compact.

34. Under the leadership of the Federal Government, and with the proactive engagement of the federal member states, the United Nations, the World Bank and the European Union joined efforts in preparing the drought impact needs assessment to inform and define the recovery and resilience framework. While remaining committed to meeting crucial humanitarian needs, the initiative supports the Government of Somalia in understanding drivers of vulnerability and identifies sustainable development solutions that can help communities adapt and build resilience to drought and break the vicious cycle of recurrent disasters.

IV. Comprehensive approach to security

A. International coordination

35. The executive group of the comprehensive approach to security chaired by the Prime Minister, held its first meeting on 11 November to take stock of the work of the different strands of the comprehensive approach. Each strand is led by the relevant federal ministry, with the support of international partners, including AMISOM, the European Union, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. This framework has aligned the efforts of international partners with the priorities of the Federal Government, as agreed in the security pact endorsed at the London Conference on 11 May. During the meeting of the Executive Group held on 11 November, those present agreed to support the development of a Somali-led transition plan to enable Somali security institutions to assume primary security responsibility from AMISOM in a coordinated and strategic manner.

B. Comprehensive approach to security strands

Strand 1
Enabling AMISOM operations and enhancing AMISOM effectiveness

36. In the communiqué adopted by the Somalia Security Conference held in Mogadishu on 4 December, AMISOM and international partners agreed that the Mission would continue to work to a conditions-based transition, while implementing priority tasks set out in Security Council resolution 2372 (2017). Efforts continue to be made towards the operationalization of the Mission, with enabling units working in the remaining four AMISOM sectors, in addition to the two existing mission-enabling units operating in sectors 1 and 5. Making the mission-enabling units more effective remains a challenge. The main supply routes continue to be targets of Al-Shabaab, whose use of improvised explosive devices has evolved, with mobility further compounded by the impact of weather. The collapse of the Leego forward operating base on the Mogadishu-Baidoa main supply route also negatively affected the delivery of support by road, forcing UNSOS to airlift rations to locations in sector 3, with attendant high budgetary costs.

37. To mitigate the threat of explosive hazards, in support to AMISOM troops, mine action teams assessed 28 villages and towns, and 758 kilometres of road networks, destroying 178 items of explosive remnants of war. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) also supported AMISOM through the organization of its third seminar on countering improvised explosive devices for Somali security forces, held in Mogadishu from 25 to 27 September, with the participation of international partners. In response to the attack of 14 October, UNMAS deployed technical advisers, medics and explosive-detecting dog teams to search for secondary explosive devices at the blast site, including the provision of combat engineers, with heavy equipment for removing debris to AMISOM.

38. Thus far, Ethiopia, Uganda and Nigeria have signed the tripartite memorandum of understanding for the reimbursement of contingent-owned equipment and self-sustainment, while Burundi, Djibouti and Kenya are in the process of concluding their negotiations. The tripartite memorandum will facilitate the reimbursement to troop- and police-contributing countries for self-sustainment and equipment lost in hostile action. On 30 and 31 October, UNSOS organized a workshop in Mogadishu to familiarize troop- and police-contributing countries with the standard operating procedures for joint boards of inquiry under the tripartite memorandum. This will help troop- and police-contributing countries submitting claims to the United Nations for the reimbursement of lost or damaged contingent-owned equipment.

39. During the reporting period, UNSOS facilitated the withdrawal of all 335 Burundian and 31 Djiboutian AMISOM troops that were deployed in Cadaado in October 2016 to secure the 2016–2017 electoral process in Galmudug.

40. On 9 October, the Head of UNSOS convened a donor conference in Mogadishu to launch an appeal for contributions to the AMISOM and Somali national army trust funds, which stood at $388,591 and $2.7 million, respectively. The Somali national army trust fund was augmented by a contribution of $9 million from the United States in November.

Strand 2
Strengthening Somali security institutions

41. Strand 2.A: Ministry of Defence and Somali national army: the operational readiness assessment of the Somali national army began on 10 September, led by the Federal Government and supported by international partners. Assessment teams reviewed more than 80 per cent of all army units at battalion-level and above, with the aim of assessing military capacity to inform the process of transition from AMISOM to the Somali national army. The assessment identified key constraints to fighting Al-Shabaab, specifically, a lack of: military personnel; logistical support; and weapons, ammunition and mobility. The Federal Government and UNSOM jointly developed a "right sizing" concept, which, in combination with the operational readiness assessment, is intended to guide force realignment in line with the national security architecture. The Federal Government of Somalia has developed detailed recommendations as a result of the finding of the assessment, including: (a) rewriting the Somali national army code of conduct; (b) initiating a biometric accountability process linked to soldiers' payment; (c) the need to retire a substantial number of soldiers in order to "right size" the force; (d) the need to mentor the army down to the unit level; and (e) the immediate setting-up of a planning group to address the identified operational shortfalls.

42. On 30 November, 2,400 Puntland forces were integrated into the Somali national army, an important step toward the implementation of political agreements

around security. With this integration comes the expectation that the Federal Government is now responsible for all pay and sustainment, clearly demonstrating the link between revenue generation, revenue sharing and security. The Federal Government and the federal member states made a political commitment to resectorization, redrawing Somali national army boundaries to match political boundaries.

43. UNSOS continued to support 10,900 Somali national army troops in joint operations with AMISOM in all locations. Due to limited resources, of the eight items mandated for support, five are currently being provided on a regular basis: basic rations; fuel; water; transportation; and medical evacuation by air.

44. Strand 2.B: Development of the Ministry of Internal Security, the National Intelligence and Security Agency, federal and state police, special police units and the coast guard: to advance the implementation of the new policing model, as set out in the national security architecture, the authorities of the Federal Government and the federal member states established a conference of ministers of internal security and a council of police commissioners. On 3 December, the National Security Council decided on the allocation of the proposed 32,000 police officers, with 4,571 officers allocated to each federal member state and 9,145 officers allocated to the Federal police and the Benadir region. The Council also endorsed state police plans, setting out a strategy for each federal member state for the development of its police service up until 2027. Under strand 2.B: the Federal internal security strategy was endorsed by the National Security Council; the management structure of the Ministry of Internal Security has been reformed; and an operational readiness assessment of the police has been conducted.

45. The report on the maritime security operational readiness assessment prepared by the European Union Capacity-building Mission in Somalia and UNSOM detailed capacities, legislation, equipment, personnel and the state of training in the Federal Government, the federal member states and "Somaliland". With support from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and UNSOM, the Ministry of Ports and Marine Transport drafted a revised maritime code. Parliamentarians and senior government officials convened a workshop, from 28 to 31 August, to discuss instituting a sustainable legal framework for a national maritime administration. The Federal Government, in collaboration with the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs and UNSOM, held a briefing on ocean affairs and the law of the sea issues in Mogadishu on 12 and 13 September for Members of Parliament, the second time such a briefing had been offered as part of United Nations support for the implementation of the 1982 Convention on Law of the Sea.

46. UNMAS continued to assist the Somalia Explosive Management Authority to develop its mine action strategy and advised the Federal Government on the "Badbaado (Protection) Plan", which outlines actions and financial requirements for the management and reduction of the impact of explosive hazards. In Mogadishu, police explosive ordnance disposal teams trained by UNMAS conducted post-blast investigations for 69 scenes at which improvised explosive devices had been deployed. UNMAS continued to train state police on explosive ordnance disposal and mentored federal police in handling explosive detection dogs. UNMAS and UNSOM continued to deliver specialized weapons management training and advice on developing a national commission for the control of weapons and ammunition. To date, over 10,500 weapons have been marked and registered.

47. Strand 2.C: Rule of law and justice: following a delay due to ongoing political discussions between the Federal Government and the federal member states, on

3 December the National Security Council reached a political agreement on the justice and corrections model, enabling a future systematic building of justice institutions at the state and federal levels.

Strand 3
Stabilization and community recovery and the extension of State authority

48. The Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, with support from UNSOM, finalized the revision of the national stabilization strategy, one of the goals outlined in the security pact. The strategy emphasizes civilian leadership and underscores the linkages between community recovery and reconciliation, local governance and the rule of law interventions. It provides the framework for state-level plans to support the coordination and prioritization of interventions to be developed by the Galmudug, HirShabelle, Jubaland and South-West authorities and the Benadir regional administration. During the reporting period, the Jubaland and South-West State ministries of interior initiated work on their respective stabilization plans, with technical and financial support from the federal Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, the United Kingdom early recovery initiative and UNSOM.

49. The United Nations and donors continued to provide support for the efforts of the Federal Government to address the underlying drivers of fragility across Galmudug, HirShabelle, Jubaland and South-West states. The European Union, the Somalia Stability Fund and the United Nations Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery continued to support the formation of district councils to enhance state accountability. On 15 October, the Interim South-West Administration inaugurated the first district council in Xuddur. The council formation process continued in four districts in South-West and five districts in Jubaland. The authorities in Galmudug and HirShabelle are in the process of drafting local government laws.

50. The Somalia stability fund continued to support initiatives covering community infrastructure and the rehabilitation of government facilities in several districts. UNMAS continued to promote community-level stabilization activities through the clearance of hazardous material affecting 59 communities. In addition, 160 assessments of non-functional public infrastructure were conducted and shared with community resilience and recovery partners for the safe conduct of operations.

Strand 4
Preventing and countering violent extremism

51. On 7 October, the Deputy Prime Minister of Somalia and the representative of Sweden officially launched strand 4 on preventing and countering violent extremism. A subsequent national roundtable discussed the threat of violent extremism, its root causes and future steps to address the problem. Following the official launch, the existing donor platform was merged into the ongoing activities of strand 4 to ensure the coordination of technical discussions with, and assistance for, Somali Federal and state governments.

52. In October, the United Nations supported the efforts of the Federal Government to amend its national strategy on preventing and countering violent extremism. In November, UNSOM, with the assistance of the European Institute of Peace, supported authorities in Galmudug, HirShabelle, Jubaland and South-West in developing local action plans to address drivers for recruitment and radicalization. In November, an

agreement was also reached between stakeholders on amendments to the national strategy and the state-level action plans.

53. The national programme for the treatment and handling of disengaged combatants in Somalia continued, with UNSOM support. During the reporting period, UNSOM also supported training on the harmonization of screening processes and completed the implementation of pilot reinsertion projects, benefiting 1,000 disengaged fighters and community members. In collaboration with the Federal defectors rehabilitation programme, UNSOM also produced a six-part radio drama to encourage Al-Shabaab militants to defect.

Transition planning

54. At the Somalia Security Conference, held in Mogadishu on 4 December, participants agreed that a conditions-based transition plan should be immediately developed by the Federal Government, together with the federal member states and with the support of the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and other international partners. They agreed that work would begin at once on a realistic, phased, conditions-based transition plan, with clear target dates, drawing on the results of the operational readiness assessment, to transfer security responsibility from AMISOM to the Somali security forces. In line with Security Council resolution 2372 (2017), AMISOM made adjustments to its deployment in Sectors 1 and 2, where two forward operating bases were merged into one in Sector 1 and two forward operating bases were collapsed in Sector 2.

V. Human rights and protection

A. Human rights

55. During the reporting period, 1,301 civilian casualties were recorded, 64 per cent of which were attributed to the 14 October attack carried out by Al-Shabaab (828 casualties). Two casualties are attributed to AMISOM and 79 to state security forces, while clan militia were responsible for 57 casualties. In total, 58 civilians were abducted: 45 by Al-Shabaab and 13 by clan militia, including one aid worker. In airstrikes conducted by unidentified warplanes in Jubaland and South-West, 14 civilians were killed and13 were injured.

56. Several incidents illustrated continued challenges to freedom of expression. A journalist was sentenced to 18 months in prison for defamation and false news in "Somaliland", while two journalists were arrested and released without charges after reporting on a demonstration in Jubaland. The state of emergency imposed in Galmudug entailed restrictions on freedom of expression and information. A journalist died following injuries sustained from an Al-Shabaab attack in Beledweyne, in the Hiran region, in September. In "Somaliland", one media outlet was closed, reportedly for broadcasting false news, and access to social media was blocked during the presidential elections in November.

57. On 23 September, UNSOM co-hosted a one-day consultative meeting in Mogadishu with Members of Parliament, heads of Somali media associations and officials of the Ministry of Information on the 2016 Media Law and amendments to the law approved by the cabinet of the Federal Government. The consultative meeting fed into parliamentary discussion during the first reading of the Media Law bill in late September.

58. The African Union and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights co-hosted a workshop on 27 and 28 November in Addis Ababa on accountability mechanisms in African Union peace operations, with participants from AMISOM and other regional peace operations. The workshop generated a set of agreed criteria for effective accountability mechanisms and a work plan intended to have a direct impact on AMISOM activities in the broader human rights compliance framework.

59. On 10 December, UNSOM released a public report entitled "Protection of civilians: building the foundations for peace, security and human rights in Somalia". The report, which covers the period from 1 January 2016 to 14 October 2017, calls on all parties to the conflict to take measures to protect civilians in the conduct of military operations and comply with and ensure respect for international human rights and humanitarian law. A "centrality of protection" strategy, which promotes a joined-up and integrated approach to protection, was endorsed by the humanitarian country team on 6 December, following consultations among all entities of the United Nations presence in Somalia.

B. Compliance with the human rights due diligence policy

60. In October, the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy Task Force adopted a general and preliminary risk assessment on the Somali Police. It identified the risks of violations being committed by the police, as well as measures to prevent them. UNSOM informed AMISOM of eight incidents of possible human rights violations resulting in 24 civilian casualties between April and August 2017. Delayed responses by AMISOM to allegations, especially the outcome of prima facie investigations and boards of inquiry, continue to hamper efforts towards ensuring accountability through the policy framework. A request for an update on the outcome of the investigation into an allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse from June 2017 remained pending, following an AMISOM letter dated 11 July that promised an investigation and the eventual institution of a board of inquiry, if necessary.

C. Child protection

61. The Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting verified 1,977 cases of grave violations affecting 1,654 children (1,372 boys, 282 girls) from August to December. Al-Shabaab accounted for over 65 per cent of such violations, including 262 children abducted during its August recruitment campaign. Sustained engagement by the above mechanism with the national programme for the treatment and handling of disengaged combatants and the National Intelligence and Security Agency, including on the standard operating procedures on the reception and handover of children formerly associated with armed groups, led to the handover of 32 children to the United Nations between September and November for reintegration purposes.

62. The Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting supported the sensitization of 1,073 soldiers in Baidoa, Beledweyne, Cadaado, Jowhar and the Somali national army headquarters in Mogadishu on child protection and screening. Four children were identified. In addition, the United Nations Children's Fund and UNSOM organized a training of trainers session on child protection standards from 11 to 19 November for 20 officers of the Puntland forces.

63. Recruitment of children increased sharply. During the reporting period, 653 cases of child recruitment were reported: 70 per cent attributed to Al-Shabaab; 6 per cent to clan militia; and 11 per cent to the Somali national army. On 6 December, the Federal Ministry of Defence and the leadership of the Somali national army held a high-level event at army headquarters as part of a nation-wide outreach to enhance the awareness and knowledge on child protection, and to strengthen policies to prevent and end the recruitment and use of children in Somali armed forces.

D. Prevention of sexual violence

64. The United Nations continued to receive reports of sexual violence from across the country, mostly affecting displaced women and girls living in settlements for internally displaced persons. The monitoring and reporting mechanism, through its analysis reporting arrangements, received six reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence in September and October. Fifty-nine incidents of rape and other sexual violence, involving 58 girls and one boy, were reported by the country task force on monitoring and reporting. In September and October, the gender-based violence subcluster provided services to 13,083 girls, 6,806 boys, 23,257 women and 8,231 men on prevention and capacity-building activities in relation to gender-based violence. Underreporting of cases due to fear of reprisals and limited access to police services is a major concern. While the provision of support services for survivors of sexual violence has improved in Somalia, it remains a protection gap in areas under Al-Shabaab control, such as the Bakool and Bay regions in South-West State. A consultative forum to review Somalia's national action plan on ending sexual violence in conflict was held on 28 and 29 November in Mogadishu, during which the action plan was adopted by Puntland, Galmudug and HirShabelle.

VI. Humanitarian situation

65. Large-scale famine in Somalia has been averted so far thanks to a sustained humanitarian response. Latest analyses show that food security needs are nearly double the five-year average, with an estimated 2,444,000 people in crisis phase and 866,000 in emergency phase. Priority areas for response include Sanaag and Sool in the north, and parts of Galmudug, HirShabelle and South-West in the south. Internally displaced persons settlements in urban areas such as Baidoa, Garoowe, Hargeysa and Baidoa are also a priority. Over three million people are being reached per month with life-saving assistance and livelihood support. The food cluster, supported by UNFPA, has helped develop tools to guarantee that vulnerable women and girls are included when food is distributed.

66. Overall humanitarian needs remained high, with an estimated 6.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. The rains brought on during the *deyr* rainy season in October were erratically distributed and approximately 50 per cent below average in most areas, and rainfall in November and December is not expected to significantly improve crop prospects. Continued emergency humanitarian assistance will be required alongside a further scale-up of livelihood assistance to prevent populations at risk from sliding deeper into food insecurity.

67. Malnutrition reached emergency levels in a number of locations, mainly among displaced populations. Overall, some 388,000 acutely malnourished children are in need of critical nutrition support, including life-saving treatment for more than 87,000 severely malnourished children. Malnutrition rates continue to rise, with the

median prevalence of global acute malnutrition rate now at 17.4 per cent, above the emergency threshold of 15 per cent. Internally displaced persons, including more than 80,000 pregnant women, are currently more prone to malnutrition.

68. With over 23,000 people newly displaced in October, the total displacement due to drought and conflict in 2017 is now over one million, with nearly two-thirds of that population under the age of 18. This brings the estimated number of displaced people in Somalia above two million. Humanitarian indicators in internally displaced persons settlements have also deteriorated, mainly due to overcrowding. Between August and November, UNFPA, through partners, provided 38,974 internally displaced women of reproductive age with essential sexual and reproductive health services, including safe delivery services, referrals, ante-natal care and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

69. Suspected cases of acute watery diarrhoea/cholera continued to decline from a peak of 5,300 cases in June to 93 in August, with no related deaths reported since August. Between January and November, 78,426 cases of acute watery diarrhoea/cholera and 1,159 deaths were reported in 55 districts of 19 regions across Somalia. Of these cases, 58.8 per cent involved children below five years of age.

70. Donors have provided more than $1.2 billion towards famine prevention since the beginning of 2017. As of mid-November, the revised 2017 humanitarian response plan seeking $1.5 billion had received $882 million (59 per cent) in funding, leaving a gap of $618 million. An additional $308 million has been provided outside the humanitarian response plan. In addition to developing the 2018 humanitarian needs overview and the humanitarian response plan, humanitarian partners were closely engaged in the development of the drought impact needs assessment and the recovery and resilience framework requested by the Federal Government to ensure that the next drought does not turn into a famine.

71. The operating environment in Somalia remains challenging. The first 10 months of 2017 witnessed rising violence against humanitarian workers. Over 130 violent incidents impacted humanitarian organizations, with 15 humanitarian workers killed, 30 injured, 3 physically assaulted, the arrest and temporary detention of 17, the abduction of 30 and the attempted abduction of one. During the reporting period: 7 humanitarian workers lost their lives and 20 others were injured in the 14 October attack in Mogadishu; 2 personnel working for development organizations were killed; 11 abductions were reported between August and October; and 3 humanitarian workers were released in October.

VII. United Nations presence in Somalia

72. United Nations entities continue to be present in the following locations in Somalia: Baidoa, Beledweyne, Bossaaso, Dollow, Gaalkacyo, Garoowe, Hargeysa, Kismaayo and Mogadishu. As of 1 December, there were 486 international and 1,175 national United Nations personnel deployed throughout Somalia.

73. The security risk levels for the AMISOM-protected area at Mogadishu International Airport are being assessed. UNSOS continues to implement recommended risk mitigation measures to improve safety and protection for all United Nations personnel within the airport. Similar projects are ongoing in Baidoa, Beledweyne and Kismaayo. The United Nations conducted its annual crisis management simulation exercise on 27 and 28 November. Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE) training for United Nations personnel

working in Somalia has been moved from Nairobi to Mogadishu, with the first course successfully conducted in Mogadishu between 3 and 6 December.

VIII. Observations

74. Between August and early November, Somalia witnessed worrying political and security setbacks that exposed, in concert with the prevailing humanitarian crisis, the fragility of the progress made so far and the scale of the challenges ahead in Somalia's peacebuilding and state-building process. Despite these challenges, the Federal Government and federal member states have demonstrated a strong resolve to overc e their differences through dialogue. I call on all international partners to redouble their efforts to support the Somali leadership, in a coordinated and sustained manner, as well as in the larger interest of Somalia and its people. The horrific attacks in Mogadishu in October exemplified the reversibility of the hard-fought political and security gains in Somalia. This is not the time for us to relent.

75. The Federal Government's agenda is a good one and much has been achieved. However, mutual trust between the Federal Government and federal member states is essential to: improve security and resolve conflicts; generate revenues and provide services; strengthen political and financial accountability; and address poverty and dependency. Regular consultations between the Federal Government and the federal member states are critical. The meeting between the parties from 29 October to 5 November was a show of commitment towards closer collaboration, and this dialogue process must be strengthened. I call upon both the Federal Government and the federal member states to address remaining issues transparently through legal means, respecting Somalia's provisional constitution.

76. Renewed efforts are required to make progress on the constitutional review process and strengthen federalism. I welcome the signing of the memorandum of understanding and agreement on the consolidated road map on 14 November. Progress on the constitutional review, in an inclusive manner, is fundamental for further state-building in Somalia, including the allocation of powers, revenue and resource sharing and the State formalization process. It will also lay the foundations for one-person-one-vote universal elections in 2020–2021. I call upon the Federal Government to move the constitutional review process forward in earnest, including by holding the delayed national constitutional convention.

77. Al-Shabaab continues to pose a serious security threat in Somalia and the subregion. I am deeply shocked and saddened by the scale and impact of the attacks in Mogadishu on 14 and 28 October. I strongly condemn these attacks and stand with Somalia in its continued fight against terrorism. I am appalled by the civilian casualties resulting from indiscriminate attacks that continue to target civilians, including government officials, civil servants, aid workers and journalists. I commend the unity shown by the Federal Government and the federal member states in confronting the menace posed by extremists.

78. AMISOM remains critical to security, as Somalia builds the capacity of its security institutions with the support of partners. A gradual and orderly conditions-based transition to Somali security institutions will be an important phase in the process of state-building in Somalia. Within the comprehensive approach to security, the building of an affordable, acceptable, accountable and able Somali national army and police should be coordinated. The process should be led by Somalia and supported by international partners in a coherent effort.

79. I call on the Somali Government, with the support of key international security partners and the United Nations, to develop a clear plan for security in the country, which will enable the conditions-based transition of lead security responsibility from AMISOM to Somali security institutions. The operational readiness assessment represents the most current, honest and credible assessment of the Somali national army. Its outcomes, and those of a similar assessment of the Somali police, will enable a better understanding and improved coordination in building and reforming the Somali security sector pursuant to the security pact agreed upon in May and in accordance with the agreement on the national security architecture. Immediate priorities include agreeing on the distribution of military personnel throughout Somalia and making progress on integrating existing security personnel into accountable federal and sub-federal security institutions.

80. While I am encouraged by AMISOM commitments made in strengthening compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law within the human rights due diligence policy framework, I remain concerned over the slow pace of implementation of recommendations agreed during the African Union-United Nations joint review of AMISOM to strengthen measures and mechanisms to prevent and address violations in the context of military operations. I call on AMISOM, the troop-contributing countries and Member States to support United Nations efforts to strengthen compliance. I also call upon the Federal Government to ensure that entities of the Somali national army benefitting from United Nations support have effective mechanisms in place to mitigate the potential risk of violations. In line with the conditions-based transition, a stronger emphasis on measures to prevent and respond to violations must be placed at the centre of the discussions on the gradual transfer of responsibilities by AMISOM to Somali security institutions.

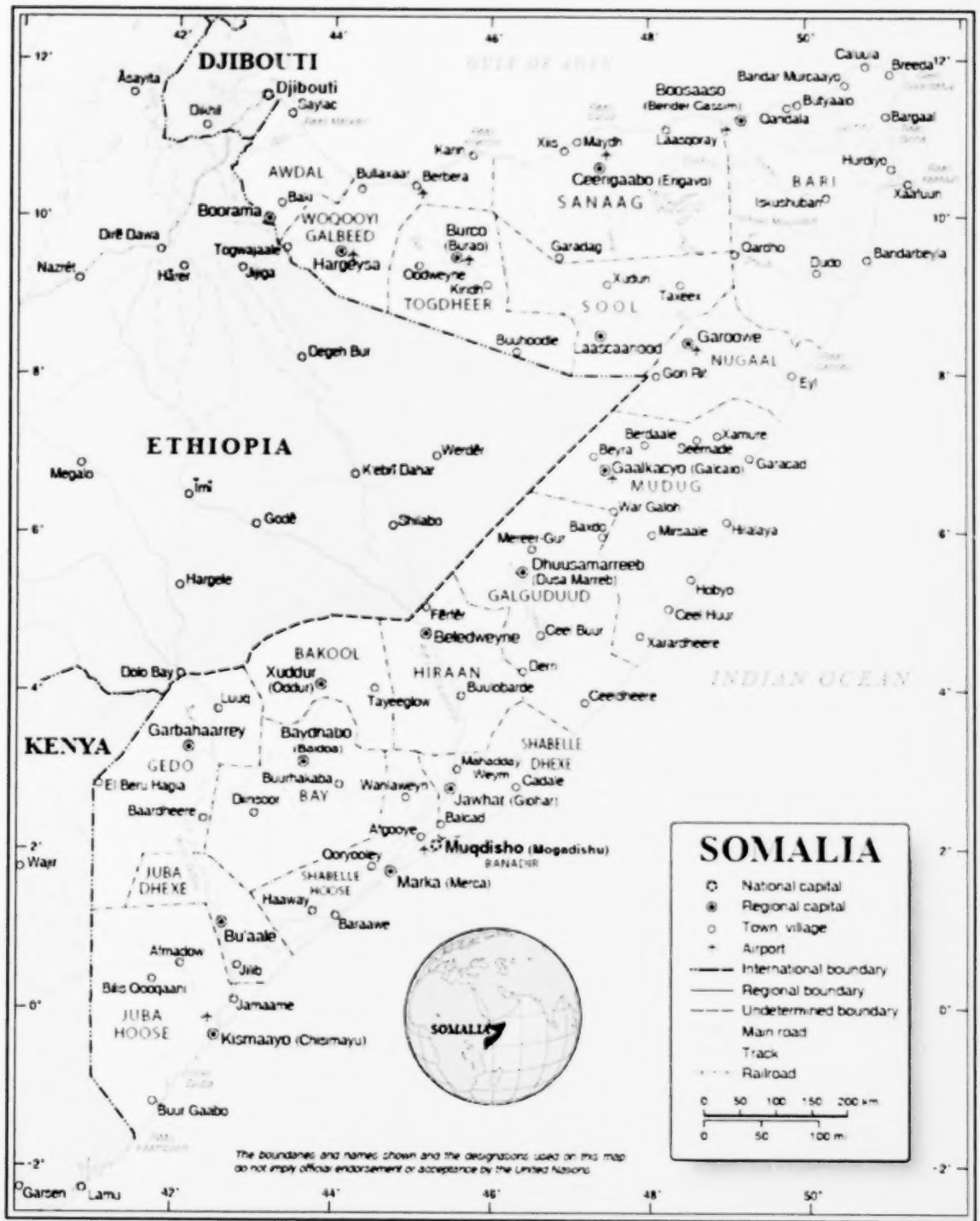
81. I welcome the successful conclusion of the delayed presidential election in "Somaliland" on 13 November. Notwithstanding minor disturbances, the peaceful voting and the acceptance of results serves as another example of the strong commitment of "Somaliland" to democratic processes. I call upon the new administration to further the democratization process in "Somaliland" by respecting constitutional timelines and holding parliamentary elections without delay. It is my hope that "Somaliland" and the Federal Government of Somalia will now revive their stalled dialogue, for which they have both previously expressed readiness. The United Nations remains committed to supporting that process.

82. While the worst has been averted, the threat of famine in Somalia persists. I remain deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation, including the deepening food insecurity, increasing malnutrition, displacement and ongoing conflict and insecurity, which continue to hamper the delivery of life-saving assistance. I welcome the continued generous support of the international community for drought-affected communities and call on donors to remain engaged. We must strive to sustain the current level of humanitarian assistance to keep famine at bay. I also welcome the development of the drought impact needs assessment, under the leadership of the Federal Government, and with the proactive engagement of the federal member states, to inform and define the recovery and resilience framework, which aims to build resilience within society and enable developmental solutions to address the cycle of drought. The framework will be closely aligned with the 2018 humanitarian response plan in order to ensure complementarity of approaches.

83. I thank the African Union, AMISOM, IGAD, the European Union, Member States, non-governmental organizations and other development partners for their continued support for the peacebuilding and state-building process in Somalia. We

must continue to strengthen our partnership in the quest for lasting peace and stability. I pay tribute to AMISOM and the Somali security forces for the sacrifices they continue to make in Somalia in the interest of long-term peace and stability in the country and beyond.

84. I pay tribute to Faiza Mohamed Sheikh Mohamud, the UNDP staff member who made the ultimate sacrifice in promoting the cause of peace and stability in Somalia and extend my deepest condolences to her family. I thank my Special Representative, Michael Keating, my Deputy Special Representatives and the staff members of UNSOM, UNSOS and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes engaged in Somalia for their continued hard work under extremely challenging conditions.



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General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 26 December 2017 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to you with urgency, appealing for efforts to uphold the longstanding international consensus regarding Jerusalem, as enshrined in numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Considering recent decisions taken in violation of international law and those relevant resolutions — and in effective complicity with the grave breaches being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem — the international community must remain resolute in reaffirming the validity of the relevant resolutions and in demanding that they be fully respected.

In this regard, and in the light of the extremely regrettable decision announced by the President of Guatemala regarding the decision to move his country's embassy to Israel to the City of Jerusalem, we call upon all States to address this matter without delay, to reject this provocative, unlawful decision and to act swiftly to uphold the integrity and authority of United Nations resolutions.

We must recall, once again, the Security Council's numerous resolutions regarding Jerusalem, including resolutions 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). We recall, in particular, the Council's reaffirmations regarding the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force; its recognition of the specific status of Jerusalem; and its clear determination that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

It is also necessary to recall that the Security Council explicitly called upon all Member States to accept its decision not to recognize the "basic law" enacted by Israel on Jerusalem and any other such actions seeking to alter the character and status of Jerusalem, and directly called upon those States that had established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from the Holy City.

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In the past, Guatemala conformed with this determination by the Security Council by transferring its embassy from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. The recent announcement by President Morales of his intention to reverse this action would place Guatemala in breach of international law and the relevant resolutions. We are thus compelled to reiterate that neither this decision by Guatemala, nor any other action contrary to the Council's positions, has any legal effect and cannot change the applicability of international law to this situation.

However, such decisions will surely embolden Israel's illegal policies and measures in the City and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, rewarding the occupying Power for its intransigence, supporting its impunity and thus further obstructing peace prospects, all of which entail certain liability in the context of international law. Israel is not sovereign over Jerusalem, and the status of the City remains unresolved. Jerusalem has long been designated a final status issue in the Middle East peace process; East Jerusalem has remained occupied territory since 1967. In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council unequivocally affirmed that the Council would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations. These are facts that cannot be disregarded or ignored, regardless of political pretexts and illogical justifications.

In this regard, we must also recall that the longstanding international consensus was yet again reaffirmed by the Security Council following the announcement by the President of the United States of America of his decision to recognize Jerusalem as capital of Israel and to transfer the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, in contravention of the relevant resolutions. We recall the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Council — 14 member States — stood firm in rejection of that decision and in compliance with the relevant resolutions and their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations — in spite of the United States veto of the draft resolution presented to the Council for a vote on 18 December.

Moreover, we highlight the fact that the General Assembly, during its resumed tenth emergency special session, on 21 December 2017, adopted resolution ES-10/19, in which it stressed once again the abiding international position on Jerusalem, reaffirming the Assembly's compendium of relevant resolutions along with those of the Security Council. In its resolution ES-10/19, which also received overwhelming support, the Assembly demanded, inter alia, that all States comply with Security Council resolutions regarding the Holy City of Jerusalem and that they not recognize any actions or measures contrary to those resolutions. It also affirmed that any decisions and actions which purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem had no legal effect, were null and void and must be rescinded. The Assembly further called upon all States to refrain from the establishment of diplomatic missions in the Holy City of Jerusalem.

An unequivocal message must therefore be conveyed reaffirming the applicable laws and resolutions and opposing any such unilateral and provocative decisions by whomever and whenever. Moreover, these developments totally contradict the international and regional efforts, called for by the Security Council and the General Assembly, to create the conditions necessary for any meaningful peace negotiations to resolve this prolonged and tragic conflict. Those concerned with the promotion of peace and justice cannot reasonably condone or excuse such actions. We thus appeal again to all States to be resolute in their rejection of these actions and in their non-recognition of this unlawful situation.

The impact of such provocations cannot be underestimated, nor can the significance and sensitivity of Jerusalem to the Palestinian people, Muslims and Christians, and to all Arabs and Muslims worldwide. A comprehensive, just and

lasting solution to the question of Palestine cannot be achieved without a just and lasting solution to the question of Jerusalem.

The Security Council and the General Assembly have explicitly called for the protection of the City's unique spiritual, religious and cultural dimensions and heritage. They have also repeatedly affirmed the legitimate interest of the international community as a whole with respect to the question of Jerusalem, which has long-been accorded special political and legal status, beginning with General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, in which the City was designated a *corpus separatum*.

We thus call upon all States to act in conformity with the law and with a deep sense of responsibility, in the interest of peace. We further call upon the international community as a whole to act urgently to avert the further destabilization of this extremely volatile situation, which poses a threat to international peace and security. Any decisions or actions that disregard these fundamental legal, political and religious dimensions of the question of Jerusalem can only aggravate already-heightened tensions and further destabilize the situation, with far-reaching consequences. This includes the inflammation of religious sensitivities that risk transforming this solvable political-territorial conflict into a never-ending religious war, which can only be exploited by religious extremists, fuelling more violent radicalism and strife in the region and beyond.

At this critical and sensitive moment, it is vital for the international community to reaffirm the primacy of international law to the efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to reassert the credibility of the international system at this crucial moment. The decision of any State to render itself complicit with the Israeli occupation and its violations must be met by an immediate and firm response by the international community. Such collective resolve is indispensable if we are ever to salvage the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and to arrive at the day when the Israeli occupation is brought to an end and a just and lasting peace is achieved, whereby the Palestinian people can finally achieve their inalienable rights and achieve their freedom in their independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with all its neighbours.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador, Permanent Observer
of the State of Palestine to the United Nations